



WILL INCREASING TEACHERS' PAY IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN INDONESIA?

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ABSTRACT

Background: Despite Indonesia's efforts to improve its quality of education, it still has not made lasting progress in improving quality of education. Studies have shown that Indonesia's education system requires much more progress to be made in order to not only improve the quality of education but also enable it to become more globally competitive. This paper explores the aspect of government funding towards education - specifically, the salaries of teachers in local schools.

KEYWORDS: Quality of Education, Competitiveness, Salaries, Score, PISA, Investment.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has made significant progress in improving the quality of education. Presently, more Indonesian children are studying in school than ever before, with 6 years in primary school and 3 years in junior high school being compulsory (scholarodatabase, n.d.). Furthermore, the Indonesian national government passed the 'Teacher Law' in 2005 which stated that teachers who accomplished a certification process would earn a permanent doubling of their salaries (Joppe de Ree et al, 2008). However, Indonesia still has not made lasting progress in improving the quality of education. In 2014, the former Minister of Education and Culture, Anies Baswedan, proclaimed that Indonesia's educational performance was very poor and violence within the school system was so prevalent that the country faced an education "emergency" (Baswedan, 2014).

GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

Several studies have found that Indonesia's education system is one of the largest worldwide - with more than 50 million students, 3 million teachers, and 300,000 schools (Statista, 2022). Alternatively, it has been surmised that their education system has not been successful in becoming internationally competitive. Singapore has a population of 5,974,200 (2023), which is significantly smaller than Indonesia's population of 273.8 million (2023). Despite this, Singapore is largely more internationally competitive. Singaporean students often rank highly in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) exams, a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that measures 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance in mathematics, science, and reading. According to The Straits Times (2020), Approximately 46% of the Singaporean students who took the test achieved the highest global competency proficiency levels of four and five. Singapore's Ministry of Education (MOE) also implemented language policies and programs which led to the nurturing of global competency knowledge, skills, and attitudes. According to the MOE, more than nine in 10 Singapore students have the ability to speak at least two languages. A nation that is also notable for having an impressive education is China. According to Yong Zhao, the director of the Institute for Global Education at the University of Oregon, the first time students of Shanghai competed in the PISA or any other major international assessments, they performed strongly on the test, achieving top scores in all the categories. The students of China continued to excel in the 2012 round (p. 20). The PISA awards officially granted China the title of "World's Best Education." (p. 21). China continuously built its education system, and by 2018, gross enrollment rates rose to a great extent in junior high schools from 66.4% to 103.5% (Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China, 2018). However, it must also be taken into consideration that China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are much higher than Indonesia's. According to the World Bank, China's GDP was 17.73 trillion USD in 2021, meanwhile, Indonesia's was 1.186 trillion USD in the same year. On the other hand, Singapore's GDP was 397 billion USD in 2021, yet, their quality of education - as discussed previously - is much higher than Indonesia's; even though Singapore's population and size are also significantly smaller than Indonesia's. Therefore, it can be concluded that the economic stability of a country plays a factor in its quality of education.

In 2017, Indonesia's Industry Ministry launched an initiative of vocational education programs for Central Java and Yogyakarta. Following this, the Education and Culture Ministry soon renewed 42 vocational schools across Indonesia. Education and Culture Minister, Muhamdijir Effendy, believed that these programs were essential to tackle the challenges of rising global competition. However, Indonesia's educational performance has not aligned with its goals to become more internationally competitive. According to the

results from the PISA of 2018, Indonesian children ranked 72nd place among those competing against 76 other nations. The results showed that Indonesians lacked literacy in Mathematics, Science, and reading - scoring below average in these areas. Figure 2.1 shows that Indonesia's scores on PISA, TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science), and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) have seen little improvement over the years.

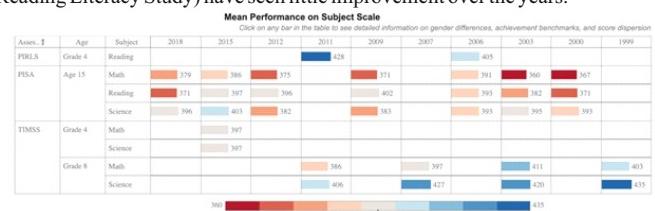


Figure 2.1: Indonesia's academic performance on international assessments
Source: The World Bank. (n.d.)

In addition to this, research suggests that Indonesia's quality of research and training in higher education – even in the country's best institutions – remains poor in comparison to both worldwide standards and neighboring countries. Figure 2.2 illustrates how the highest-ranked Indonesian University only ranked 1001st worldwide in 2023.

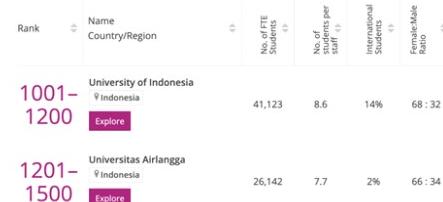


Figure 2.2: University Rankings for Indonesia Globally
Source: Times Higher Education. (2023)

THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT'S FUNDING TOWARDS EDUCATION & TEACHERS' SALARIES

In analyzing Indonesia's poor-quality education, international development organizations such as the World Bank and the OECD have stated government spending on education as a key factor.

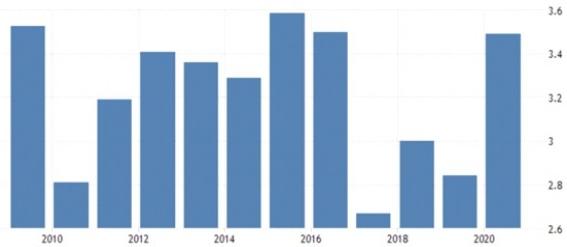


Figure 3.1: Indonesia's public spending on education, as a total percent of GDP
Source: Trading Economics. (n.d.)

Figure 3.1 represents Indonesia's public spending on education as a percentage of its total GDP. Although Indonesia's government heavily invested in education in the 2010s, education spending is still significantly lower compared to neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Countries ▾	Education spending, percent of GDP, 2020 ▾	Global rank ▾	Available data ▾
India	4.47	1	1997 - 2020
Malaysia	3.92	2	1971 - 2020
Philippines	3.88	3	1980 - 2020

Figure 3.2: Government spending on education, percent of GDP, 2020

Source: The Global Economy (2021)

The low government investment in education has led to poor quality education in Indonesia due to several reasons. Firstly, it has encouraged the rise of low-quality private educational institutions which exploit the high demand for education not met by the public schools. Additionally, Indonesia's ability to pay educators high salaries is also limited as a result of the low government funding for education. This led to "reduced incentives for high-quality school/HEI graduates to pursue teaching careers" (Rosser, 2018) (para. 18). Ultimately, this resulted in the poor quality of teachers and lecturers. The status of being a teacher was low compared to other occupations in Indonesia and teachers in neighboring countries. Prior to the 2005 Teacher Law, a large number of teachers in Indonesia were significantly underqualified, with more than 60% of all teachers throughout kindergarten through secondary schools not possessing a four-year bachelor's degree. Furthermore, "around 25% of the teachers had failed to go beyond high school" (Chang et al., 2014).

SURVEY REGARDING INDONESIAN TEACHERS' PAY

According to the desk research conducted for this study, it was observed that the low pay of teachers has played a contributing factor to Indonesia's low quality of education. Hence, a survey was conducted among educators in local Indonesian schools throughout elementary school to high school, in order to provide further evidence. The survey entailed questions about how they feel regarding the current educational system and how important or motivating a more competitive salary would be for them.

Firstly, the majority of the respondents have been teaching for between a year to as long as 20 years. According to the data collected in the survey, it can be observed that a significant portion of 58.3% of them believed that the amount of their salaries affected their quality of teaching by the highest level (See Figure 4).

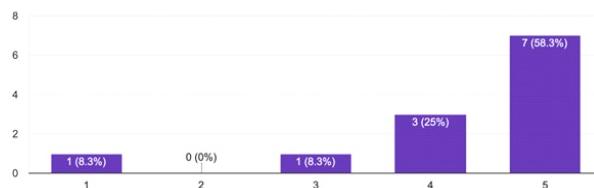


Figure 4: Survey percentage of teachers who believe that their salaries affected their quality of teaching

Secondly, respondents gave a variety of answers when asked if they feel that the Indonesian education system is of sufficient quality. 41.7% answered 'yes', while 16.7% answered 'no.' Meanwhile, the other 5 respondents gave differing answers. For instance, one explained, 'The quality is unbalanced as there are many areas in Indonesia which are left out.' The remaining respondents replied that the quality of education could still be improved, despite already being sufficient (See Figure 5).

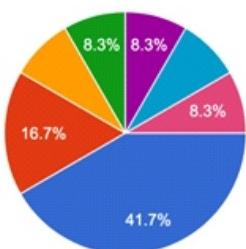


Figure 5: Survey percentage of teachers who believe that the Indonesian education system is of sufficient quality

Lastly, the survey asked if the respondents felt as though local Indonesian teachers should earn a bigger salary. An overwhelming majority of 63.6% answered 'yes' while 18.2% answered 'no'. The remaining 9.1% believed that local teachers should have an equal salary to private schools and other types of teachers. Meanwhile, the last 9.1% believed that only the more experienced local teachers who have worked longer in the field should be paid higher salaries (See Figure 6).

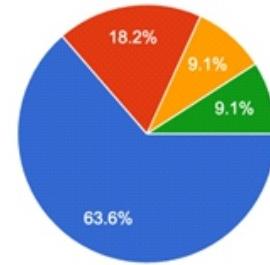


Figure 6: Survey percentage of teachers who believe that they should earn higher salaries

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be summarized that despite the significant progress and policies that have been implemented towards improving the quality of education in Indonesia, increasing teachers' pay in local schools could improve this specifically through the quality of teaching. As observed by the survey, the amount of salaries earned by Indonesian teachers significantly affects their quality of teaching. Moreover, a multitude of studies and research has shown that the lack of investment from the government towards the pay of teachers has had a large impact on the quality of teachers in Indonesia, which undoubtedly has an effect on the future generations of students. Therefore, increasing teachers' pay in Indonesia can not only improve the quality of education but also improve Indonesia's global standing in the area of education as well.

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